

Corrupt Condition of the Church.

right to be regarded as the Church of Christ. His modern biographer, Dr M'Crie, may be going too far in his assertion that " the corruption of the Christian religion, before the Reformation, had grown to a greater height in Scotland than in any other nation within the pale of the Western Church." Knox's biographer had surely not read attentively the contemporary testimonies as to the declension of clerical morals in other western lands. From what we already know of these testimonies, it would be difficult to outmatch them from contemporary Scottish records. Still we have ample reason for saying that the state of matters was as bad in Scotland as anywhere in western Christendom. In 1540, for example, Parliament is found complaining of " the unhonestie and misrule of kirkmen, baith in witt, knowledge, and maneris," which had brought the priesthood into universal contempt. In 1549 an ecclesiastical council sitting at Edinburgh is still more explicit in its avowal (in Latin) of " the corrupt manners and profane lewdness of ecclesiastics of almost all ranks, together with their crass ignorance of letters and all culture," Ten years later a number of lords favourable to the old Church united in a petition to the regent for clerical reform on the ground of " the open sclander that is givin to the hail estates throucht the said spirituale mens ungodly and dissolute lyves."

I have already adverted to the severe censures of John Major, who certainly was no favourer of heresy. I might adduce the testimony of a later churchman who steadfastly clung to the old faith while denouncing the vices of the old clergy. "Give [if] any of you," sorrowfully admits Ninian Winzet, "wyl object that the priestis, bischopis, and the clergie in our dais his been blekkit [blackened] with the saidis deformities and [are] sa ignorant, or vitious, or baith, and alswa [so] sclanderous that they are unworthy the name of pastores, alace! we ar rycht sorie that this is trew for the maist part and mair." Another orthodox witness, Quintine Kennedy, abbot of Crossraguel, referring to the abuse of benefices held *in commendam* by feudal lords, is still more bluntly explicit: " And quhen they have gotten the benefice, gyf [if] they have ane brother, or ane sone, suppose he can nolder [neither] sing nor say, nor ischeit in vice al his dayis, fra hand he sal be mountit on ane mule, with ane syde [silken]